

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 9890

S E C R E T KINSHASA 5149

NODIS

FOR IMMEDIATE DELIVERY TO AF ASSISTANT SECRETARY MOOSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG

SUBJECT: SHABA ATTACK: PULL-OUT OF BELGIAN FORCES

REF A) CUTLER/SWING TELECON, MAY 22; B) KINSHASA 5120

1. BELGIAN AMBASSADOR RITTWEGER DE MOOR CAME TO MY HOUSE LATE LAST NIGHT IN A STATE OF GREAT DISTRESS. HE HAD SPENT THE DAY VISITING KOLWEZI, KAMINA AND LUBUMBASHI. KOLWEZI HAD SHOCKED HIM -- EVEN WORSE THAN HE HAD THOUGHT -- AND HE DOES NOT BELIEVE ANY EXPATRIATES WILL RETURN THERE TO WORK UNLESS THEY ARE ASSURED PROTECTION BY EITHER EUROPEAN TROOPS OR ZAIRIAN TROOPS COMMANDED BY EUROPEANS. THE BELGIANS IN SHABA ARE JUST AS MUCH AFRAID OF FAZ SOLDIERS AS THEY ARE OF THE KATANGAN REBELS. HE CONFIRMED WHAT CONSULATE LUBUMBASHI HAS REPORTED: THAT SINCE KOLWEZI WAS RETAKEN, THE LEVEL OF FAZ HARASSMENT IN SHABA HAS BEEN RISING AND HAS AFFECTED EXPATRIATES ALONG WITH ZAIRIANS.

2. RITTWEGER DE MOOR'S IMMEDIATE CONCERN IS THE REACTION AMONG BELGIANS IN SHABA TO THE RETURN HOME OF THE BELGIAN FORCE IN KOLWEZI, WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE TODAY, MAY 22. AFTER HIS TRIP YESTERDAY, RITTWEGER DE MOOR TELEPHONED BRUSSELS URGING THAT THE TROOPS BE HELD AT KAMINA BASE FOR FOUR OR FIVE

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DAYS. HIS STATED CONCERN IS THAT THE MORALE AND ANXIETIES OF BELGIANS LEFT IN SHABA ARE SUCH THAT AN IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF BELGIAN TROOPS MAY TRIGGER THE BEGINNING OF A MASS EXODUS OF EXPATRIATES FROM SUCH MINING CENTERS AS LIKASI, KIPUSHI AND LUBUMBASHI.

HE FEARS THAT THIS, IN TURN, COULD ENGENDER ANTI-BELGIAN (AND

PERHAPS ANTI-FOREIGN) REACTION AMONG ZAIRIANS WITH ALL THAT MIGHT ENTAIL. I BELIEVE RITTWEGER DE MOOR IS JUST AS MUCH CONCERNED THAT TROUBLES MAY DEVELOP ANYWAY IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS BETWEEN BELGIANS AND ZAIRIANS IN THE WAKE OF KOLWEZI, WITH THE CONSEQUENT NEED FOR BELGIAN TROOPS FOR PROTECTION PURPOSES. HE FEARS THAT, GIVEN THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN BRUSSELS, ONCE THE TROOPS PULL OUT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO BRING THEM BACK IN.

3. BUT MY BELGIAN COLLEAGUE'S REASONS FOR WANTING TO DELAY THE PULL-OUT ALSO RELATE TO WHAT WE BOTH BELIEVE MAY BE A RAPIDLY DEVELOPING POLITICAL CRISIS FOR THE MOBUTU REGIME. AS REPORTED REFTTEL, THE RAMIFICATIONS OF KOLWEZI PROMISE TO BE VERY SERIOUS. THE KATANGANS' SUCCESS HAS RENDERED THE REGIME MUCH MORE VULNERABLE TO PRESSURES FOR CHANGE. EVEN IF BY SOME MIRACLE THE COPPER INDUSTRY CAN BE STARTED UP AGAIN SOO, THE DISLOCATION TO THE ECONOMY IS BOUND TO BE PROFOUND.

4. PERHAPS EVEN MORE SERIOUS FOR THE REGIME IS THE FACT THAT FAZ, AFTER A YEAR OF EFFORTS TO REORGANIZE AND STRENGTHEN IT, WAS AT KOLWEZI REVEALED TO BE TOTALLY INEFFECTIVE. THIS CAN ONLY SERVE TO ENCOURAGE THE REGIME'S OPPONENTS, BOTH IN ANGOLA AND IN ZAIRE ITSELF. AND WITHOUT AN EFFECTIVE ARMY OF HIS OWN, MOBUTU WILL HAVE TO RELY INCREASINGLY ON FOREIGN TROOPS AS HE NOW SEEMS TO BE DOING WITH THE FRENCH. IN VIEW OF FAZ'S STATE, ANOTHER STRIKE ACROSS THE BORDER BY FORCES IN ANGOLA -- WHICH I REGARD AS A GOOD POSSIBILITY SOON
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AFTER THE BELGIAN AND FRENCH CONTINGENTS LEAVE -- COULD BRING DOWN THE HOUSE. AT A MINIMUM IT COULD PLACE US AND OUR WESTERN FRIENDS IN A MOST DIFFICULT POSITION WITH VERY LIMITED OPTIONS OPEN TO US.

5. AS WE CONTINUE TO SORT THROUGH THE DEBRIS OF KOLWEZI, I WILL TRY TO DEVELOP THOUGHTS AS TO HOW WE MIGHT BEST COPE WITH THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH LIE AHEAD. BUT YOU SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THE EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK HAVE RAISED IN MY MIND -- AND IN THAT OF THE COUNTRY TEAM AS WELL -- NEW DOUBTS ABOUT THE FUTURE VIABILITY OF THE MOBUTU REGIME. I HAVE DISCOVERED THAT THE BELGIAN AMBASSADOR SHARES THESE DOUBTS FULLY, AND HE INTENDS TO GIVE THE MATTER INTENSE THOUGHT DURING THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO SEE WHERE HE COMES OUT. HE HAS FRANKLY ADMITTED TO ME THAT THAT IS ANOTHER -- AND PERHAPS THE MAJOR -- REASON HE WANTS TO RETAIN FOR AT LEAST A FEW DAYS LONGER THE OPTION OF THE PRESENCE IN-COUNTRY OF BELGIAN FORCES.

6. THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY MANY OTHER FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN DECIDING WHETHER WE SHOULD INTERVENE WITH THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IN FAVOR OF DELAYING THEIR PULL-OUT, INCLUDING THE FACT OF OUR SUPPORT ROLE AND THE LARGER QUESTION OF HOW CLOSELY WE SHOULD GET INVOLVED WITH THE BELGIANS HERE IN VIEW OF THE OBVIOUS POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES

THEY ARE HAVING WITH MOBUTU (IN CONTRAST TO THE FRENCH). ON BALANCE, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD DISCUSS THIS MATTER URGENTLY WITH THE GOB AT A HIGH LEVEL, TAKING THE POSITION THAT NOT ONLY MIGHT A FEW DAYS' DELAY SERVE TO AVOID FURTHER ECONOMIC DISARRAY IN SHABA, BUT ALSO BUY SOME TIME TO BETTER ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF LAST WEEK'S DISASTER ON ZAIRE'S INTENAL SITUATION. IN VIEW OF THE DIFFERING VIEWS ON MOBUTU WITHIN THE GOB, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT IN ANY DISCUSSION WITH THEM WE NOT RPT NOT AT THIS POINT REVEAL THE CONCERNS RE THE REGIME'S VIABILITY WHICH I AND MY BELGIAN COLLEAGUE ARE DEVELOPING.

6. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE GOB IS NOW DELIBERATING WHETHER TO ISSUE THE FORMAL ORDER TO PULL OUT, AND THAT A DECISION IS EXPECTED TODAY.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MILITARY PLANS, POLITICAL SITUATION, EXPATRIATES, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KINSHA05149
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: OA
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P850070-1884
Format: TEL
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780534/aaaabchs.tel
Line Count: 137
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 02bf8a99-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 KINSHASA 5120
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2618355
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SHABA ATTACK: PULL-OUT OF BELGIAN FORCES
TAGS: MOPS, PINS, MPOL, CG, BE, (RITTWEGER DE MOOR, EUGENE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/02bf8a99-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014